1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

601 III. TABLES OF RELATIVES WITH WHOM MARRIAGE IS PREFERRED

A. *Of Ego's Generation: Either Man or Woman*

Term	*Relationship*	*Reciprocal term*
Epalume or *cepua*	cross-cousins of all degrees (see list Table I. A. 4, p. 47)	*epalume* or *cepua*

B. *Of First Ascendant Generation: Man Speaking*

Tatekāi	father's 'sister' (see list Table I. D. 4, p. 48)	*ocimumba*

C. *Of First Ascendant Generation: Woman Speaking*

Manu	mother's 'brothers' (see list Table I. D. 3, p. 48)	*ocimumba*

D. *Of First Descendant Generation: Man or Woman Speaking*

Ocimumba	mother's 'brother's' or father's 'sister's grandchild'	*manu* or *tatekāi*

591 582 Many writers have noted that, among other purposes, the financial arrangements serve to give the bride a status in the village of her husband. In a system of preferential kinship marriage, this is a desideratum, although for other reasons than those operating in a system where the wife comes as a comparative stranger. In a system such as this of the Ovimbundu, it is evident that many of the relatives by marriage are already blood relatives. This is perhaps one reason why the avoidances with regard to 'in-laws' are less rigidly held to than in a society such as the Zulu, which holds strictly to exogamous marriage.[1]

182 601 Another factor which makes for stability of marriage is the bilineal kinship system (*epata*). This system offers to the wife an initial security not usually found where descent is unilineal, or even where there has been a one-sided development of one line of descent at the expense of the other. The bilineal system is an important factor in the preservation of social stability. Through it the household and the village are links in the chain which even yet binds the Ovimbundu into a social whole.

Sorcery

182 754 Umbundu society is subject to various forces which threaten its cohesion and stability both from without and from within. Some of the external forces have been touched upon.[2] Chief of the

[1] Krige, op. cit., p. 29 f. [2] *Supra*, pp. v, 26.

there was a great metal industry in Viye, where hoes were made for trade with the interior; later the wholesale manufacture of hoes was taken over by Ndulu, where there are the best and most easily accessible deposits of iron. In exchange for hoes they received palm-oil or cattle from other regions, or salt, rum, or goods from the coast. Other regional specialisations were :- Kasongi and the Sele country for palm-oil, Cikuma for beeswax, cattle from Ngalangi, Kalukembe, and, further south, corn-meal from Ciyaka, Civula and Bailundu.(1)

438 [316]

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

KINSHIP AND DESCENT

The Ovimbundu appear to have a system of double descent which has not yet been fully reported and analysed, and whose nature is not very clear from existing accounts. The following outline is based on information given by Childs,(2) who unfortunately details the functions but not the composition of the kin groups concerned. In a review(3) of Childs' book, Barnes has formulated a descent system which would be congruent with Childs' description, and his suggestions are outlined here.

611 114

The epata

Childs translates *epata* as "blood relatives", and his use of the term suggests that it may have either a general or a limited sense. Thus he writes (p.42): "Nearly all of the villagers belong to the same *epata* or extended family, which includes both lines of descent. Most of them belong to the father's family *(oluse)*, and the mother's family *(oluina)* may also be represented." And, in another context, (p.44): "When an Ocimbundu speaks of his *epata* (family) in the sense of a large and widespread organization with a recognized head....it is generally his *oluina* [mother's family] to which he refers."

596

The oluse and the oluina

Every Ocimbundu belongs in the first instance to two distinct kin groupings: the *oluse*, to whom he is related through his father, and the *oluina* to whom he is related through his mother. Uterine brothers and sisters belong to the same *oluse* and *oluina*, but to the male and female side respectively, according to sex. (see below.) A difficulty has arisen because both Hambly(4) and Childs appear to regard *both groups* as bilateral. Hambly states explicitly that the *oluse*, or *epata lia tate* (family of my father) includes *all* relatives on the father's side, and the *oluina* or *epata lia nai* (family of my mother) *all* relatives on the mother's side. Childs writes (p.45) "Bearing in mind *their bilateral nature* ..... the functions of [the *oluse* and the *oluina*] may be summarised...". But from his summary it is obvious that the *oluse* and the *oluina* cannot be bilateral groups, neither can they have parallel descent systems of any kind. Marriage is patrilocal, and the *oluse* forms a local unit while the *oluina* is

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[591]

(1) Childs, 1949, p.205.
(2) 1949, pp.42-6.
(3) Man, September 1950, p.127.
(4) Op.cit., pp.191-2.

601 ocisumbo (since Childs states (p.55) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) *Ndatembo* must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus *Nakambotia* and *Sakambotia* are the father and mother of Kambotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. *mai, tate, nanu* etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

607 (c) The term *nawa* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nawa* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndatembo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by .. a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially .. to the *ndatembo* or *nawa* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect *(esumbilo)*."(1)

A note on the kinship system

613 421 178 There is a tendency today for the claims of the *oluse*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *oluina*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

592 595 *The "household"*, consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *onjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *oluina*, in which case he has a spirit-hut *(etembo)* in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 48 households only 10

[591] [554]

(1) Childs, p.52.
(2) Ibid., p.56; see also ibid. pp.70, 45, 50 etc.
(3) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.25-41.

621 The total number of households is 44, or 48 including those of the four
592 section heads. It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in Child's
114 figures (apart from an obvious misprint):(1) in another context he writes that section B contains only 12 houses (not even *households*), while from this table it would appear that section B has 15 household heads, including that of the section head; and section C is said to have 6 households, while only 4 (again counting the section head) are accounted for in this table.

591 Childs states(2) that the incidence of patrilocal marriage in Ngendo
114 is fairly typical of Umbundu country, but unfortunately gives little information regarding the relationship of the various spouses to each other or concerning the location of the villages from which they came. Matrilocal marriage is recognised as a possibility: of the three relatives by marriage listed above, one was a husband of a daughter of the headman, another the widow of a younger brother of the headman, who should have been inherited by a younger brother (?) or a mother's brother of the deceased, or, failing that, could have returned to her father's village. Of those listed above as sisters' children, two were widows who had come to live in the village with their mother's brothers.(3)

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The village headman(4)

622 The village headman *(sekulu yimbo)* is also the head of the *oluse*
793 which forms the nucleus of the village group, and is related agnatically to most of the householders. He alone may speak of the village as *imbo*
782 *liange* (my village); the heads of sections, who are also called *sekulu*(5) may speak possessively only of their own sections *(ocitiwilo conge)*, and other villagers speak only of "our village" *(imbo lietu)*.(6) The headman functions as both priest and legal head of the village. As priest he has in his compound the *etambo* (spirit hut), in which the insignia of office are kept, and in which he prays to the ancestral spirits. Upon occasion he may sleep there, usually offering a prayer to the spirits when he wakes during the night. The *etambo* may also be [346] used as a lodging place for respected guests, or as a store-house for possessions not used every day. Childs states that he officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals; Hambly adds that he may lead the people in offering sacrifices when epidemics of
613 sickness break out in the village. It has been noted above(7) that it is the function of the *oluina* head to lead such rituals when illness occurs within the *oluina*. In general the village head is responsible for
[622] matters - particularly agriculture and public health - which affect the whole village; individuals, both for protection and for help and other

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.28, line 27, where "twenty-four" should read "forty-four".
(2) On the basis of the 192 genealogies and 74 marriage-schedules which he collected. He does not, unfortunately, give examples or show how the comparison was made.
(3) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.25-31.
(4) This section is based on Childs, op.cit., pp.36-7.
(5) It has been noted above that *sekulu* is used for all men (and some women) of the grandfather's generation.
(6) op.cit., p.283. (7) p.18.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

601

Kukululu or *sekululu*. These terms are applicable to my father's father's brother, my father's father's brother's wife; my father's father's sister's husband; and my mother's father (the reciprocal *onekulu* describes the reciprocals, brother's son's son; husband's brother's son's son; wife's brother's son's son; daughter's son).

Maikulu. This designation, which is derived from *mai*, meaning mother, and *kulu*, an old person, is applied to my father's mother (reciprocal, *onekulu yange*, son's son). *Maikulu* also means my father's father's sister; my mother's mother; my mother's mother's brother's wife; and my mother's mother's sister (the reciprocal is *onekulu* which equals the English reciprocals brother's son's son; daughter's son; husband's daughter's child; and sister's daughter's child).

This completes the second generation of ascendants.

NOTE: Ngonga's wife uses the names *maikulu* and *kukululu* for those relatives of her husband to whom Ngonga himself applies those terms. These relatives call Ngonga's wife *onekulu*.

TABLE D

(See Table E IV and V, also Table F II, IV and V)

SOME OF NGONGA'S DESCENDANTS

Nunulu or *useli* is my first-born son. Other sons are *omola*, meaning child. *Omola ulume* means a male child. *Omola ukai* is a female child. *Useli* also means a first daughter (the reciprocal for these terms is *tate*, meaning father).

Omolange means my child. I apply the word, not only to my own children, but to my elder brother's son (reciprocal, *tate*, father's younger brother); to my elder brother's daughter; and to my younger brother's son.

Ndatembo. The word is applied to my son's wife; my daughter's husband; my elder brother's son's wife; my elder brother's daughter's husband; and my younger brother's son's wife (the same word *ndatembo* is used for the reciprocals of these terms; namely, husband's father; wife's father; husband's father's younger brother; wife's father's younger brother; and husband's father's elder brother).

The foregoing classificatory system of relationship is not peculiar to the Ovimbundu, but is a cultural trait of many Bantu-speaking and some Sudanic-speaking Negroes. The similarity of the Umbundu system to those of surrounding peoples in Rhodesia and the Congo will be pointed out in chapters dealing with culture contacts.

601 171

When describing marriage rites reference was made to the fact that a wife goes to live near her husband's relatives; the system is therefore patrilocal. The limited family consists of husband and wife (or wives) with their children. The greatest number of wives observed in the family of a commoner was four, and in the family of a king eleven. A household sometimes contains adopted children, also domestic slaves (pawns) who are working to pay off debts for their maternal uncles. An extended family may include a grandfather and his wife, his sons, their wives and children, and his unmarried daughters, with classes and nomenclatures mentioned in the foregoing tables.

591 592 [595] [597] [567] 596

The phrase *epata lia tate* (or *aluse*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *epata lia*

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6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

It was then the father who normally exercised authority over a boy, and on the father's death a child or youth would join the household of a father's brother. Yet the right of a sister's son to the inheritance of the movable property and to grants from his mother's brother was counterbalanced by the latter's right to sell his uterine nephew into slavery, a fate from which the father could save his son by ransoming him, in which case the mother's brother would no longer have this right.[86] In this society, the mother's brother—sister's son relationship was fundamentally an economic one, in which the sister's son received assistance in the trade and inherited his uncle's gains in this trade, but could himself be transformed into a source of capital.

I now summarize the evidence on Umbundu social control and its relation with the trading economy. It is clear that the Ovimbundu belonged to the number of those African societies with pyramidal[87] political systems and formal codes and courts of law, even though there exists uncertainty as to the relative power of the kingdoms and the sub-chiefdoms. Social control also operated through the kinship system, authority at the village level being in the hands of the head of the patrilineal group backed by the public opinion expressed in the men's house, and the dispersed matrilineal groups having sanctions in the right of sale of a sister's son and in the accusations of sorcery brought against those who failed to use wealth to aid their relatives. For the caravan trade to have attained the importance it did there must also have existed something of a *pax Umbunduca* stimulated by the existence of such ties as that between *tjiseko* partners and the 'international' hospitality shown to diviners, hunters, and smiths. Evidence of this *pax Umbunduca* is provided by the organization of caravans, and by the establishment of marriage ties between persons in different kingdoms, and between different royal houses.[88] However, warfare was not unknown between the different

[86] Childs, p. 44, and my informants.

[87] See Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, Introduction to *African Political Systems*.

[88] Hastings (p. 1) notes a marriage between the daughter of a king of Ilo and Ekwikwi, king of Bailundo (1876–95). Childs (p. 171) notes that Kakulukutwe, king of Ndulu, was a sister's son of a king of Bailundo.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

wife of Ernesto (6). Patrilateral 'father' to Paula (24) and Saviel (11). Affinally related to Mwehombo, a 'sister' of whom he had married.

Wayangu, paternal half-brother of Mwehombo, resident at Epalanga till the end of 1955, wife's father to Aspirante (1) had married a sister (not clear whether own or classificatory) of Lusase.

3. *Kinship and marriage in the village setting*

The foregoing tabulated information and the charts indicate the two main principles of integration in Epalanga, as in other Umbundu villages, the settling of individuals near senior kinsmen and the existence of a number of intra-village marriage ties.

For a clearer outline of village structure to appear, it is necessary to give a brief sketch of the contemporary kinship system which will be discussed more thoroughly in later chapters. This is cognatic, with little distinction between patrilineal and matrilineal kin, the elementary family being the basic household unit, the individual being permitted to settle with any category of kin, and a high percentage of preferential marriages.[7]

The right of settling where one pleases, as 'the heart chooses', is recognized even in children. Minessi, the 7-year-old son of Gonçalve (18), used generally to eat at the household of his father's sister Paulina, the wife of Joaõ (20). Gonçalve said about this to me 'He is very fond of his father's sister.'

While the traditional norm by which a man lived in his father's village is still remembered, at least by older men, a

[7] Childs (p. 56) states that it is permitted to marry a cross-cousin on either side, a sister's daughter, and a father's sister. My informants generally agreed that the marriage with a father's sister was not and had not been permitted. Marriage is not permitted with 'true' kin of these categories. Padre Feltin, the superior of the Bimbe Catholic Mission who knew of the existence of these marriages, told me that very few Umbundu marriages came within the prohibited (a prohibition removable by a dispensation) degrees of kinship laid down by the Catholic Church (that is, up to, and including, third cousins). Such marriages in the past might have been with geographically as well as socially distant kin. Childs quotes a case of a marriage arranged, after the discovery of a kinship tie, between partners living as far apart as Ciyaka (Quiaca) and Ngalangi (Galangue).

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

father does not exercise great authority over his grown sons even if they live in the same village, nor does their living in different villages lead to a breach in personal relations. Sapapula who told me that a man should stay in his father's village till the latter's death had four sons, none of whom lived in Epalanga. Two lived in Menga (where Sapapula had lived up to 1946) and maintained friendly contact with their father. One who lived in Cela seemed socially as well as geographically more remote, and the fourth was a labour migrant given up for lost.

The preferential marriages[8] have continued in practice when most of the other institutions of the old kinship system have disintegrated. Their function is to multiply the relationships between individuals living in a particular neighbourhood, and to limit the socio-geographical range within which marriage partners are selected. Of a sample of 121 existing marriages 87, that is 70.3%, were with cross-cousins, and only 13.7% were with non-kinswomen.[9]

Even some of the non-kin marriages fitted into the general pattern of increasing ties within a limited social field. Thus in Epalanga Jaime (19) had married Delfina, a brother's daughter to Ndjoleya. They were not kinsfolk yet this fitted in with the pattern of kin marriages in increasing links between different kinship cores in the village. Similarly Costa (26) and his wife Nakalende were not agreed (when questioned separately) as to whether they were kinsfolk, but this is not really significant since

[8] I had been inclined to interpret these marriages as functions of the relations between kin groups. Dr. Mary Douglas has suggested to me that these marriages were in the past not related to any system of kin groups but had, as at the present day, the function of multiplying the kinship ties within a limited field. I do not know of any clear evidence which could at this time settle the point.

[9] I count here as kin marriages those between *sakwatjiuka*, funeral friends, who though not kinsfolk tend to be assimilated to cross-cousins in social usage. 'Cross-cousin' tends to be at the present time a blanket category, and I have repeatedly found asking men about their wife's kinship status that they would first give some other term and then change to 'cross-cousin'. [Epalume]. This explains why under present conditions the percentage of cross-cousin marriages in relation to the total number of marriages seems to be rising. Thus in 56 marriages (existing or terminated) contracted by 23 men who had taken part in the caravan trade, while the percentage of marriages with non-kinswomen was slightly smaller (12.5) the figure of marriages with cross-cousins was very much smaller (42.9) and the figure of marriages with kin other than cross-cousins, sister's daughters, and *sakwatjiuka* was much higher (25 %) compared to the contemporary figure of 5%.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

word 'otjitawila' is given by Dr. Childs[11] as being used for a section of the village; however, I have not found this word known locally.

It may be asked how typical Epalanga is of other villages. In size it is larger than usual, having 36 households. (The average number, using figures from 14 villages, is 18.36 households; the largest, Epalanga, had 36 and the smallest 5.) In structure other villages presented the same picture of ill-defined kinship cores held together by a network of kin and affinal ties, with village headmen emerging by a varying collection of claims, of which the most significant seemed to be a position as the principal focus of kinship ties.

5. *Kinsmen and the Choice of Residence*

When one asks a man why he has settled in a particular village, a common enough answer is that he has settled there because he has 'family' there. When asked who his 'family' (the Portuguese word *familia* is used even by non-Portuguese speakers) is, he will give the name of a senior kinsman, or he may give more than one name. He may even give the name of somebody living outside the village. Thus in Epalanga when I asked Bartolomeu why he had settled there he replied that it was because of his mother's brother Lusase who was not an Epalanga resident. It was therefore not practicable for me, as I had at one time intended, to find which categories of kin are most likely to be settled with, by asking individuals in villages I censused, and obtaining percentages.

It is possible to indicate some of the 'pulls' which affect a choice of residence. In the traditional system, when a boy's father died he would settle with a father's brother. Nowadays, it is generally expected that he will settle with his mother's brother, this being the answer given by informants when asked where he will go. In practice, the pull of the mother's brother's household for a child does not seem to be so strong. In Epalanga, out of thirteen persons under 20 who had neither father nor mother resident in the village, only one was living with a mother's brother.

[11] See Childs, pp. 36–37.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

On the village level, however, the importance of the mother's brother tie and of the tie between matrilateral 'brothers' becomes very apparent. None of Sapapula's four sons had settled in Epalanga, and his only classificatory 'son' was Gonçalve, own son to Mwehombo, Sapapula's matrilateral 'brother'. Seven household heads were sister's sons of Sapapula. This trend for matrilateral ties to predominate is marked also in Katembo and Mbunga, but less evident at Belem. Indeed, 'neo-matrilinearity' as a principle of village structure may be a general and not simply a local feature of Umbundu society, since Mr. C. M. N. White[13] has found that the settlements of Ovimbundu within Northern Rhodesia are marked by a predominance of matrilateral ties. This is referable to the contemporary kinship system in which the father-son tie is predominantly a personal one, with a limited extension of attitudes to classificatory fathers, whereas a man's relation with a mother's brother seems little affected by the question of genealogical distance. Perhaps the relations between the group of agnatic kin were so closely tied to the old village structure that when it broke up it disintegrated also the wider agnatic ties. Yet at the same time such matrilineal institutions as matrilineal inheritance and the non-repayment of loans among matrikin have weakened or disappeared.

Running counter to this principle of settling in the village of a senior kinsman who is likely to belong to one's matrikin, is the principle of cross-cousin marriage. 'If you have married your cross-cousin when your son grows up he will see a cross-cousin here, a cross-cousin there, and so he will stay.' That is, a man will stay in his father's village not simply by virtue of the father-son tie but because he will be surrounded by kinsmen. The relation between cross-cousins is one of equality and solidarity, expressed in joking and in burial services. To say that one stays in a place because one has cross-cousins at hand is to indicate an ideal of equal relations with a circle of kinsmen rather than attachment to the following of an important kinsman.

These two principles co-exist in actual social life. A man will recognize and respect a number of senior kinsmen living in his

[13] In letters.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

neighbourhood and will explain his choice of residence by quoting the names of one or more of these; yet the weaving together of so many strands of kinship and affinity, ultimately through marriage links, is what gives the local population its relative degree of stability. It should be emphasized that the integration established within a village by the network of kinship and affinal ties is dependent on the integration created by the same amorphous network which runs through and beyond the sub-chiefdom. It is this network into which the individual is woven by multiple ties that absorbs the neo-matrilineal pull apparent to some degree in choice of residence and keeps the system essentially cognatic.

The use of the word *família* reflects this situation. A man may say of a particular senior kinsman 'He is my *família*', that is, my kinsman, my most important kinsman with whom I have settled, yet also he may say 'My *família* is in Cela', that is, the greater part of my kinsmen live in Cela. When Bartolomeu explained that he had settled where he did because of Lusase, he was perhaps combining the two kinds of references. He had settled in Gumba because he had a large number of kinsmen there among whom Lusase was pre-eminent. A man explaining the locality of his *família* in the wider sense will associate it with a particular sub-chiefdom—'My family is all in Menga'—when he is outside it; when he is in it he is more likely to refer to a particular village.

Although individuals living in a village may have come there through several kinship sources yet the majority of them will probably have some kinship or affinal tie with the traditional headman. This collection of individual ties does not provide the headman with a body of followers, nor is having a large number of dependants a value of contemporary Umbundu culture. If it were felt that the best thing to be in life is the patron of a body of kinsmen and followers, headmanship would survive as a predominant influence in local life despite the collapse of its political and legal responsibilities. In fact not even old men feel this way.

The idea of the village as a corporate group with a jural and political personality rather than a residential unit has not survived the break-up of agnatic solidarity, the disappearance

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

114 One anthropologist, Mr. W.D. Hambly, and two missionaries

with anthropological knowledge and interests, Dr. Daniel A. Hastings and Dr. Gladwyn Murray Childs, have written on Umbundu kinship.[3] Mr. Hambly's main interest was in material culture and the conditions of his fieldwork were not such as to give him much evidence on the kinship system.[4] Both Dr. Hastings and Dr. Childs recognized the central importance of kinship in Umbundu social life, but have outlined the kinship ties and kinship groups rather than given a detailed analysis.

602 Mr. Hambly states that 'The phrase *Epata Lia Tate* (or *Olusi*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *Epata Lia Mai* (or *Oluina*) mean "family of my mother".'[5] This could mean that the Umbundu kinship system is bilateral. He states that inheritance is matrilineal and marriage virilocal, a situation consistent with such a matrilineal kinship system as that of the Bakongo.[6]

613 622 Dr. Hastings, whose thesis was completed the year before the publication of Hambly's book, makes it clear that there are two sets of kin groups. 'Over each village is a ruling elder who is the head of the kinship group of that village since all who reside in the village are generally related to him and to each other patrilineally. This elder, greatly revered, is considered the patriarch of that local group. Residence being patrilocal, the office of an elder is hereditary through the male line.'[7] He 613 then goes on to contrast with this, 'the matrilineal sib to which each member is linked, though he may be living in a village away from his sib group.'[8] This group is a clearly defined

[3] Works cited in footnotes to Chapter I. There is a typescript of Hastings's thesis in the library of the International African Institute, London.

[4] Mr. Hambly spent five months in the country, and used as his interpreter and main informant an English-speaking Otjimbundu. He seems simply to have visited villages without living in them. Dr. Childs and Dr. Hastings had both spent several years as 'bush' missionaries Dr. Childs had actually taken over from Dr. Hastings work in the area to the north-west of Bailundo in the direction of Bimbe, and had subsequently obtained information in Cassongue. He later obtained a good deal of material from African pastors, teachers and schoolboys.

[5] Hambly, pp. 130–1.

[6] For the Bakongo see the discussion by A. I. Richards, in Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, pp. 213–21. Anthropologists have more than once suggested to the author that the Umbundu system was not of the 'double-descent' category but some combination of virilocal marriage and matrilineal descent.

[7] Hastings, p. 16.

[8] Ibid.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

leaning towards matrilateral rather than patrilateral brothers. The classificatory kinship terminology, and the lack of genealogies and kinship groups, means that a man knows a great many classificatory brothers living in his neighbourhood of whom he vaguely recognizes some as 'close' others as 'distant', but with whom his relations are not especially significant. A boy or girl who loses his or her parents is fairly likely, judging from the evidence of Epalanga households, to settle with a full- or half-brother or sister.

Formerly, owing to virilocal marriage, a sister was geographically separated from her brother, and even if widowed or divorced would not necessarily return to his village, but might go to her mother's brother.[24] With this geographical separation went a situation of possible conflict, since the brother could sell his sister's children to recoup his own debts, and the shadow of sorcery fears seems to have touched this relationship.[25] The suppression of the rubber and slave trades and the subsequent disintegration of the kinship groups have removed the economic pressures which made for conflict between matrilineal kin and the residence rules which divided people locally into groups of agnates and their wives. The brother-sister tie has therefore changed its content, since it is released from the heavy pressures formerly active in the matrilineal kin groups.

It would be wrong to produce any such generalization as 'a woman must always be under the guardianship of a male relative'. A woman who is widowed or divorced or whose husband is away working will tend, however, to develop a particular link with the male head of some household, her own kinsman usually, except in the case of a labour migrant's wife, when it may be a kinsman of her husband. Thus in Epalanga, Augusto (25) aided the household of his absent full brother Julio (29).

Aid is most likely to be given to a kinsman's wife when the two households are close together. The underlying idea seems to be to keep the kinsman's household together rather than any duty of aiding an affine. For a widow or divorced woman or the

[24] Childs, pp. 23–37.

[25] H. W. Nevinson (*A Modern Slavery*) gives a complicated story which suggests this possibility (p. 101).

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

6. *Descent, Inheritance and Succession*

There is little interest in genealogical detail among contemporary Ovimbundu, which is not surprising since there exists no system of descent groups in which the position of the individual may be genealogically defined nor does affiliation to a particular line of descent give status *vis-à-vis* people of less eminent descent. Pedigrees are traced (in either line) for only two to four ascending generations though one man I met could name ancestors for nine ascending generations.

Despite this vagueness and lack of interest in the articulation of relationships, Ovimbundu will say that such-and-such a kinsman is 'close' and such-and-such is 'distant' even though they cannot fit this into a genealogical framework. 'Closeness' and 'nearness' are not simply used to refer to geographical proximity or social co-operation, since there may be much mutual assistance between kinsmen who are 'distant'. One might speak of a blurred edge of kinship not clearly defined in categories of kin but not non-kinsmen. A man may speak of somebody on this 'blurred edge' thus: 'He must be a kinsman but I don't know how.' Similarly the *vakwatjisoko*[1] are a class of people who are not definitely kin, and not non-kin.

There is little formalized distinction between patrikin and matrikin. There is a certain matrilateral pull in the choice of residence, a man being, as has been noted, more likely to settle with a mother's brother than with a 'father'. I had the impression that a man is more likely to settle with a matrilateral 'brother' than with a patrilateral one, but it would be very difficult to establish this by quantitative methods owing to the complexity of the factors affecting residence. As a man tends to settle where he has a number of kin rather than in the shelter of one particular kinsman, this trend does not lead to the formation of matrilineal clusters of kin. The majority of informants still consider that sorcery can only be practised among matrilineal kin but for various reasons it may be said that the fear of sorcery is not significant in kinship relations.[2]

[2] It may be suggested that the disappearance of the matrilineal groups which imposed a co-operation involving exacting demands has been paralleled by the decline of sorcery, the mystical reflection of underlying tensions. How is the fact that several informants told me that sorcery had declined since the days of the

[1] [ie., funeral friends -- Analyst]

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

for the bride's village. Here they may be greeted with formal speeches of welcome in Portuguese, a usage copied from the reception of missionaries.

One only turns up to a wedding if one has been invited, and not everybody who is a kinsman living in the neighbourhood is invited. Nor is there any marked distinction between kin and non-kin in the ceremony, except for the ending of avoidances and the recognition of the father's sister, who is recompensed for her services as nursemaid. Village membership is significantly recognized in the distribution of food, and the sending of the party to the bride's home to represent the bridegroom's village.

Umbundu marriage is virilocal, although a certain number of marriages are within the village. Apart from such marriages, it seems to be rare to find a man settling in a village because his wife has kin there.

Although during the early months of the marriage the bridegroom's mother may supervise the bride's work, the individual household is essentially an independent unit[13] and was not even in the past merged with other household units to form a 'grandfamily'. This independence is not isolation. I have only a very few times seen houses with any sort of compound about them. Much of domestic life, eating, working, resting, talking, may be done out of doors in front of the house. Paying visits is a great feature of village life especially when the day's work is over, although there is also a term *oku pasula*, to visit in the morning, referring to what are usually just short calls, involving the exchange of greetings. Perhaps the opportunity of calling and being called on is one of the factors maintaining the village as a social unit. The idea that a man should not eat with his wife still survives to some extent so that questions on this topic receive contradictory answers. Observation shows that even among the men who travelled on the caravans, eating with one's wife is the general practice.

One of the most striking features of Umbundu domestic life is the close companionship which exists between husband and wife and which is unquestionably a modern development.[14]

[13] See Magyar, pp. 281–3.

[14] The role of the *Ongango* as described by Childs and Hastings indicates that a man's normal companions both for eating and recreation were other men.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

At the other end of the age-scale it is not easy always to tell to what household a child is attached. Small children may often eat with kin other than their own parents if they like them and thus share in the lives of two households. Children and adolescents may go on visits to kin and this may lead to permanent residence. This familiarity with other households is not confined to children. Although, as has been stated, eating with one's wife is the usual practice, it is by no means uncommon to see two or more men eating together, either because the wife of one of them is away or simply to be sociable.

This right of children to move about, coupled with such other factors[80] as the relatively high divorce rate, tends to bring about quite a high proportion of children who live with kin other than their own parents. Out of 70 under 20's in Epalanga (out of a total population of 148), 34 had both parents living in Epalanga,[81] 23 had one parent living in Epalanga and 13 had neither parent living in Epalanga. Of the 23 who had only one parent living in Epalanga, 7 lived with their father and 16 with their mother. Those 7 living with their father were all over 14, thus confirming the norm given by informants that young children on the death of the mother go to their mother's kin until they 'have sense', that is, are about 12 or 13, when they return to their father. Of the 13 who were living with neither parent, 2 (boys) were living with a cross-cousin (father's sister's son, for whom the term 'father' can be used), 1 (boy) with a patrilateral 'father,' 2 (1 girl, 1 small boy) with a mother's mother, 4 (3 boys, 1 girl) with a sister's husband, 1 (boy) with a paternal half-brother, 1 with a fiancé's father, 1 (boy) with a mother's brother, and on 1 (girl) I have no information.

These figures are too small to base any very strong argument on them. It is, however, notable that only 1 of the 12 children on whom information was obtained was living with a mother's brother, whereas 4 were living with a brother-in-law. This seems to conflict with statements made earlier as to the present-day trend of individuals to settle with their mother's brothers.

[80] Childs notes about the traditional system that the sending of children to stay with kin or friends for a year or two was common (pp. 104-5).

[81] This figure includes one case where although both parents lived in Epalanga they were separated.